

WHAT KIND OF AN EATER, OR OVEREATER, ARE YOU?

According to some studies, about 85% of all overweight people get that way because they use food as everything from a tension reliever to a cure for boredom. Look at the personality types described below and see if you find yourself. Once you understand how you use food, you can work on changing your eating patterns.

NIGHT EATERS. During the day, you control your eating, sometimes even skipping meals, but after dinner you can't stop nibbling. You may start munching right after the evening meal, raid the refrigerator in the middle of the night or even take food to bed with you. Usually you love sweet or spicy food; your stress level is high.

COMPULSIVE EATERS. You're always munching, nibbling, chomping and often sneak food when no one else is watching. For you, the action of eating is more important than the quality of the food. Compulsive eaters have no organized eating habits and rarely sit down through an entire meal---you'd rather snack on the run. In most cases, the compulsion to eat hides considerable tension.

LIQUID EATERS. As the name implies, you get most of your calories from fluids. You drink many quarts a day, from water and coffee to milkshakes, sodas and alcohol. Solid food for you means a sandwich, doughnut or fast food meal. Most Liquid Eaters are workaholics who live very high pressure lives.

BINGE EATERS. Although you'll go on sensibly for days, even weeks, you get sudden urges to eat. Once you start, you don't stop. You eat rapidly and steadily. When you are finished you feel relaxed, the binge has released your tension. Binges are almost always caused by stress or anxiety, often by a single upsetting occurrence. The feasting is followed by guilt.

ENVIRONMENTAL EATER. If you see food, smell it or think about it, or it simply is available, you eat it. You are particularly susceptible to pressure from other people, advertisements, social events. Weight problems usually begin with a moderate weight gain in the 30's. You tend to be an impulse eater and consume larger than average portions.

TRADITIONAL OVEREATER. You learned your eating patterns---large portions, calorie-rich meals, heavy snacking---from your family. Life revolved around eating, there was little physical activity and food was, and still is, a symbol of security and love. You're probably an excellent cook or married to one. It is difficult for you to change this pattern.

LIPOPHOBICS. You are obsessed with weight and afraid to be fat. Although you don't starve yourself like an anorexic, you stick rigidly to low-calorie meals. Many lipophobics were overweight as teens, and are haunted by becoming fat even though they are not really overweight. The majority in this group are perfectionists and often only imagine they are fat.

NUTRITIONAL OVEREATER. You gain weight because you don't eat healthfully. In an effort to cut calories, you skip meals. You often rely on diet drinks and snacks instead of eating a balance diet. Nutritional overeaters tend to have hectic schedules and jobs that make regular meals difficult.

GASTRONOMIC OVEREATER. You don't eat because of stress, but because good food gives you pleasure. You love to cook and entertain and enjoy trying new foods and recipes. Typically, weight gain creeps up slowly, until, in your mid-40's or 50's, you find you are overweight.

SEDENTARY GAINER. You gain weight because you are physically inactive. Then, because overweight makes exercise even more difficult, you gain even more. Sedentary weight gain is often related to occupation, office workers, clerks etc., those who don't have a lot of physical activity on the job.

CONVALESCENT OVEREATER. 64% of people whose normal life-style is disrupted by an illness, accident or operation, overeat during recuperation and often long after.

CHRONIC DIETER. You know everything about dieting---you just can't apply it to yourself. You want immediate results and use diet pills, reducing gadgets and miracle potions. You alternate between fad diets and bingeing, and the result is you never really lose weight and keep it off. Most people are women in their late 30's and 40's who are quite overweight.